

Monadjem-Báshí and Dr. Mohammad Khán Monadjem

(Hamid Monadjem, October 7, 2026)

While living in the village of Tafresh (approximately 200 km southwest of Tehran) as a young man, Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn Monadjem-Báshí accepted the faith of the Báb. He derived his belief from his observations of the heavens, particularly a constellation of stars in which he had perceived the appearance of the Promised One.¹

Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn Monadjem-Báshí (1820 Tafresh – 1883 Tehran) was known in Tafresh simply as Mohammad Hosseyn; at best, he was called Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn, as he came from a wealthy family.² From an early age, he gazed the celestial realm and its stars. After adopting the faith of the Báb in the mid-19th century, his own family expelled him from Tafresh because, from their perspective, he had brought shame upon them. Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn walked to Tehran and arrived there as an impoverished man. As his knowledge of astronomy quickly became known, he attracted the attention of the royal court, which appointed him as court astronomer, although they wanted him to serve primarily as an astrologer. This was the case because superstition was rampant at the royal court, as in the entire Shiite population at the time (and to some extent even today). As a result, they were only interested in astrology's promise of predictive knowledge, prophecies, and the like. Thus, he was appointed the "Monadjem-Báshí" (master of astronomy/astrology) of the royal court.³ For this reason, the author's great-great-grandfather was henceforth

¹ Tafresh has approximately 16,000 inhabitants today, but it was probably much smaller 170 years ago.

² Mirzá is a title of appreciation.

³ Monadjem means stargazer, astronomer, but also astrologer. Báshí is something like master or chief of / head of.

called Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn Monadjem-Báshí. His children retained the title Monadjem as a family name when they were required to adopt a surname.⁴ Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn Monadjem-Báshí was not only deeply interested in astronomy, but also enthusiastic about science in general. As a consequence, he later embraced the Bahá'í Faith, and through his influence, several Qájár princes, intellectuals, and high-ranking figures of the society of that time followed suit. He travelled to Baghdad, where, to the author's knowledge, he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh on at least one occasion, remaining there for a period of six months. The author's great-uncle Jamshid Monadjem (the youngest of four brothers, all of them sons of Mohammad Khán, the eldest son of Monadjem-Báshí; the author's grandfather was the eldest of these sons) told the author that his grandfather, Monadjem-Báshí, had been of a cheerful and jovial disposition and had liked to make others laugh. According to the author's great-uncle, Monadjem-Báshí always brought cheer and laughter to Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad even during periods of distress for Bahá'u'lláh due to the machinations of Mírzá Yahyá; contemporaries claimed that they heard Bahá'u'lláh laughing out loud. Moreover, Monadjem-Bashí received a tablet from Bahá'u'lláh (at least this particular one is known to the author). The tablet is relatively long and contains the reply to some of Monadjem-Bashí's questions about alchemy and related topics. The content is highly complex. This tablet already indicates that Monadjem-Báshí was a man of science. While almost all other believers (except for Nabil-i-Akbar) more or less exclusively asked Bahá'u'lláh questions about the Quran, its surahs, and hadiths, Monadjem-Báshí was primarily interested in questions and aspects of natural science.

⁴ A family named Monadjem from Isfahan can be found online, but they are not related to the author's family. The author does not know when this family acquired the name "Monadjem".

The physician Dr. Mohammad Khán Monadjem (1855 Tehran – 1920 Tehran) was the eldest son and second child of Mirzá Mohammad Hosseyn Monadjem-Báshí. Dr. Mohammad Khán is the founder of the Monadjem family. The author's grandfather was the eldest son and second child of Dr. Mohammad Khán, who was a respected physician in Tehran. He visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá and received several letters from him.

At the behest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, four Bahá'ís, including Dr. Mohammad Khán Monadjem, founded the Tarbiyat School in Tehran in 1898/1899.⁵ It comprised a school for boys (1898/1899) and a school for girls (1911). The Tarbiyat School was the first modern school — and the very first of its kind for girls — designed according to Western standards. It was forced to close in 1934. The Tarbiyat Girls' School also received support from American Bahá'ís, most notably from two American women, Dr. Susan Moody and Lillian Kappes, who served as principals and had traveled to Iran on the recommendation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

All high-ranking officials enrolled their children in Tarbiyat schools. For instance, Reza Shah sent his son, Crown Prince Mohammad Reza (the future Shah), and his daughters to the Tarbiyat school. However, a few years later, Reza Shah founded a school that also offered military instruction, and the Crown Prince then transferred to that school. The author's father was among those who attended the Tarbiyat school for a while. In his memoirs, he tells the author that the Crown Prince attended the Tarbiyat school during that same period. Moreover, the author's father's aunts taught at the Tarbiyat school, and a cousin of the author's father, who now lives in Luxembourg and is 96 years old, told the author that she vividly remembered how the daughters of Reza Shah (the sisters of the future Shah) even took one of the aunt's private lessons, and that she (the

⁵ *Tarbiyat* means education.

aforementioned cousin of the author's father, who was a child at the time) saw Reza Shah's daughters at the aunt's house.

Furthermore, Dr. Mohammad Khán Monadjem, again at the behest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was one of the founders of the "Bimárestán-e-Sehhat", the first hospital in Tehran built according to Western standards in 1909.⁶ This hospital included a dedicated women's clinic. The American physician Dr. Susan Moody headed the women's department and ensured that a nursing school was established as well.

More information:

Monadjem-Báshí:

- *Mírzá Muhammad Husayn Monadjem-Báshí & Háj Muhammad 'Attár – Family Tree*, compiled by Daryoush Mahmoodi, January 1990, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Tarbiyat schools:

- <https://bahai-education.org/sifter-star-of-the-west/organizations/tarbiyat-school>
- [https://bahai-library.com/tags/Tarbiyat School Tihran&expand](https://bahai-library.com/tags/Tarbiyat_School_Tihran&expand)
- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/iranian-studies/article/abs/promoting-the-advancement-of-women-bahai-schools-for-girls-in-iran-190935/CDA6FAEAC8E69938846E40AF73A1AD4A>
- <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-xxv-womens-education-in-the-qajar-period/>
- <http://www.qajarwomen.org/en/items/14133A56.html>

Bimárestán-e-Sehhat:

- https://bahai-library.com/pdf/f/fazel_foadi_health_iran.pdf
- <http://www.qajarwomen.org/en/items/14133A56.html>
- <https://iranwire.com/en/bahais-of-iran/69658-the-bahai-doctor-who-fought-cholera/>

⁶ Sehhat Hospital; *Sehhat* means health.